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Early and Intense Wildland Fire Season Expected In Northern Utah's West Desert

Wildland fire conditions west of Salt Lake City are bringing the fire season almost one month earlier than normal this year. Contributing factors include worsening drought, abundant grass, and high temperatures in the forecast. Several small fires have already occurred and fire managers for the Salt Lake Field Office, BLM, are preparing for a long and busy fire season.

"The vegetation is drier than normal for this time of year. We're seeing juniper setting new records for dryness and, although not very tall, cheatgrass blankets the West Desert. In many places the grass has dried out already," said Jeff Kline, Assistant Field Manager for Fire, Fuels and Aviation.

Kline continued, "These are good indicators of the type of fire season we may expect. If the summer monsoons bring only lightning storms with little precipitation, fires could start and spread easily."

The Salt Lake Field Office fire crews are on board for the season and are completing training of personnel and preparation of equipment and facilities.

When visiting the desert and mountains west of Salt Lake City over Memorial Day please go prepared. Keeping a shovel, fire extinguisher and extra water handy can make the difference should a wildfire start. Causes of wildfires can range from a vehicle's exhaust system coming in contact with dry grass to target shooting at rocks. Take every precaution with your activities in order to be safe.

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